

## University Records and Archives Access Policy

### 1. Introduction

University Records and Archives is positioned in the Library and Archives Service department, part of the Student and Academic Services Directorate within Professional Services. The role of University Records and Archives is to collect, catalogue, preserve and provide access to the University of Westminster Archive (hereafter University Archive) and the Westminster Menswear Archive.

The University Records and Archives Access Policy explains the principles guiding the provision of access to the University Archive and the Westminster Menswear Archive. This policy defines the principles that ensure that access to our resources and facilities is consistent and fair for all users and in line with professional best practices and relevant legislation.

In developing this policy, similar published policies and reports have been consulted, as well as pertinent legislation and/or authorities on best practice (see section 7).

### 2. Principles

- 2.1. We aim to make the collections held by the University Archive and the Westminster Menswear Archive available for research, teaching and learning, public engagement, and outreach. This is done in line with the Student and Academic Services Mission of providing 'professional, efficient, effective and consistent researcher and student-focused support and services.' It refers to both analogue and digital collections.
- 2.2. Any individual who abides by the Regulations for Access of University Records and Archives is welcome to access the records held, irrespective of age (users under 16 years of age may need to be accompanied by an adult), gender, ethnicity, disability, religious or political affiliation, or any other similar differentiation, in line with University of Westminster's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).
- 2.3. We aim to treat all users equally while recognizing that some users may need additional assistance. Depositors may have certain rights regarding the collections they have deposited.
- 2.4. We aim to make access as unrestricted as possible, while taking into consideration constraints on resources, the need to preserve and secure collections on a permanent basis, and relevant legislative restrictions.
- 2.5. We are committed to providing access and managing collections in compliance with legislative requirements including the Data Protection Act 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Equality Act 2010, the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988, the Re-use of Public Sector Information 2005, and other relevant legislation.
- 2.6. We are committed to providing a high-quality service to all users. However, in the event that a user is unhappy with the service provided, we will endeavour to resolve the problem. In the first instance any complaint should be made to the Head of University Records and Archives. In the event of an unsatisfactory resolution, the complaint can be escalated to the Head of Library and Archives Service and the Director of Student and Academic Services.

### 3. Our communities

We recognise that our collections are of use and interest to multiple overlapping communities locally, nationally, and internationally, including:

- University of Westminster students and staff.
- University of Westminster alumni and retired staff.
- Students and staff of other educational institutions.
- Donors and depositors of records and their heirs and representatives.
- Those who fund the archives (grant givers, financial donors, University of Westminster) Media, arts, and cultural organisations.
- The general public, including local and family historians, special interest groups, local history and community groups, and independent and commercial visitors.

### 4. On-site access

- 4.1. Access to information about the collections can be obtained online through the University Records and Archives [webpages](#) on the University of Westminster website and [online catalogue](#); and by contacting Records and Archives staff by email, telephone, letter or in person during opening hours.
- 4.2. Records held by the University Archive can be consulted at the University Archive Reading Room, 4-12 Little Titchfield Street, London, by any person free of charge; Original items of clothing held by the Westminster Menswear Archive can be consulted at the Westminster Menswear Archive, Harrow Campus Watford Road, Northwick Park, Middlesex, by any person free of charge<sup>1</sup>.
- 4.3. All users are required to read the [Regulations for Access](#) (Includes signing a form of undertaking that they will comply with the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018), complete a registration form, and produce identification before consulting the holdings of the University Archive and Westminster Menswear Archive. No member of the University of Westminster, or the general public, has a right to see any original item without completing the registration procedure, unless they are the owner of the item.
- 4.4. All public users are required to make an appointment prior to visiting the archives, in order to ensure that adequate staff and resources are available to fulfil their requests. We endeavour to accommodate University of Westminster staff and students who have not made an appointment through the operation of a scheduled drop-in service but reserve the right to refuse access to users without an appointment.
- 4.5. Users can visit the University's Archive Reading Rooms during designated opening hours. We may occasionally have to close to the public during designated opening hours for teaching and group visits. Any planned closures will be advertised on the University Records and Archives webpages in advance.
- 4.6. Our staff will provide courteous and helpful guidance to all users. Users can expect to receive assistance in using finding aids and catalogues, identifying useful research materials, and handling archival material.
- 4.7. In order to ensure equal and responsible access, users are expected to respect the Archive materials, staff, and other users, and adhere to the Regulations for Access.

### 5. Remote access and access to digital records

---

<sup>1</sup> Please note that industry access to the Westminster Menswear Archive may be subject to a charge. See our [Access for Industry Visitors](#) for more details.

- 5.1. We recognise that it is not always practical or possible for researchers to visit us in person, and that the information held here may not be available elsewhere because of the unique and distinctive nature of our collections. We will endeavour to provide remote access as far as is reasonable within the resources available.
- 5.2. We hold a small but growing collection of digital archives which consists of both born digital and digitised material. Access to digitised or born-digital records is made available online via the University Records and Archives [catalogue](#), via a hyperlink in the file level description, or a thumbnail embedded in the item description.
- 5.3. We will also provide access to selected material online through digitisation projects, blogs and online exhibitions as far as is reasonably practical. This is dependent upon resources available and legal constraints such as copyright law.

## 6. Restrictions on access

- 6.1. Most archival material is freely accessible. However, there are certain circumstances under which we may restrict access to individual items or collections. Restrictions are set by archivists, often in consultant with other professional staff or experts including Information Compliance staff. If access to individual items or collections is refused, the reason for doing so will be explained to the user in full. The principal categories of restriction are:
  - 6.2. Privacy legislation  
The Data Protection Act is in place in order to safeguard the personal data of individuals. If a document contains personal data about an individual, particularly of a sensitive nature, it will be closed for a period of up to 100 years. Requests to access records containing personal information about living individuals should be submitted in writing to the Head of University Records and Archives. These applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will seek to ensure the right balance between openness and safeguarding individuals' rights.
  - 6.3. Business sensitivity  
The University's institutional records are generally closed for a 30-year period following their creation and access will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Head of University Records and Archives, in consultation as appropriate with the Chief Operating Officer and the Information Compliance team. Information that is exempt from disclosure under FOI may be withheld. Researchers are entitled to apply for access to such material under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 by submitting a [FOI request](#).
  - 6.4. Preservation  
Access to an item may be refused if the item is in a particularly fragile condition or where handling is likely to cause damage. The decision to refuse access on the grounds of preservation purposes is made at the discretion of the archivist. Where possible, arrangements may be made to provide alternative means of accessing the item, i.e., by digital surrogate.
  - 6.5. Accession agreements  
Some of the collections held by University Records and Archives are subject to access controls by agreement with the donor or depositor of the material. In entering into such agreements, the University will have regard to Freedom of Information legislation and will attempt as far as possible to keep to a minimum the period of restriction or control, subject to meeting the legitimate concerns of the donor or depositor.

#### 6.6. Uncatalogued material

The majority of our holdings are catalogued, but some remains uncatalogued. Where this is the case, it will be indicated at the collection level description in the catalogue. Access is permitted to uncatalogued material where practicable. However, where the collection is likely to contain material subject to the restrictions outlined in 6.2 and 6.3., staff need to conduct an assessment before material can be made available and this is unlikely to be possible without advance notice.

6.7. Information about whether access to a record is restricted can be found in the 'Conditions governing access' field in the catalogue.

### 7. Enquiries

7.1. We will respond to all enquiries received from the public by email, telephone, letter, or social media channels. We endeavour to answer all written enquiries within 10 working days of receipt.

7.2. We will provide information on our holdings and perform limited research within our holdings free of charge. For particularly lengthy or detailed research we will refer users to the list of private researchers approved by The National Archives.

### 8. Provision of copies

8.1. On-site users visiting the University Archive are permitted to take digital photographs of items free of charge, provided they follow the [Self-Service Digital Photography Policy](#) and complete a Self-service Photography Copyright Declaration form. Users are required to adhere to UK copyright legislation therefore permission is granted on the basis that copies are for private research purposes only. Users of the Westminster Menswear Archive should refer to the [Images and Licensing guidance](#) online.

8.2. Users may download access copies of digital material for private research purposes only via the online catalogue.

8.3. We endeavour to provide copies of records to remote users where practicable. Remote reprographic orders may be subject to a charge to cover the cost of processing and the costs of any external photography will be passed onto the requestor.

8.4. We have a responsibility and duty of care to the unique resources in our care and may refuse to copy items if the process is likely to cause damage to the item. This includes, but is not restricted to, bound volumes, photographs, and oversized material. We reserve the right to refuse copying and the decision to undertake or refuse to make copies of items on the grounds of preservation is made at the discretion of the archivist.

8.5. Copies of material are created or taken for private research purposes only. Users who wish to publish an item from the archive collections should request permission by contacting the University Records and Archives team by email: [archive@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:archive@westminster.ac.uk)

### 9. Implementation and review

9.1. This policy will be communicated to Library and Archives Service staff, interested parties within University of Westminster, and to external agencies and others with an interest in its context, on demand. It will be made available to the public via the University Records and Archives webpages.

9.2. The University Records and Archives Access Policy will be reviewed every three years. This does not preclude earlier review should internal or external development warrant it.

## 10. Useful sources

Policies and sources of advice consulted during the drafting of this policy include:

- University of Westminster, *Freedom of Information Policy* (2019)
- University of Westminster, *Self-service Photography of Records Policy* (March 2016)
- Cambridge University Library, *Access Policy: Archives and Modern Manuscripts* (September 2018)
- King's College London, *Archives Services Access Policy* (February 2016)
- The National Archives UK, *The National Archives' Standard for record repositories* (2004)
- National Council on Archives Public Services Quality Group, *PSQG Standard for Access to Archives* (2008)
- Oxford University, *Archives Access Policy* (April 2015)
- Queen Mary, University of London, *Archives Access Policy* (January 2014)

### Version Control

DATE	VERSION	DESCRIPTION	CHANGED BY
6/10/21	1.0	New Policy	Elaine Penn